

no THE CONTINENTAL REFORMERS

accompanied by a cynical materialism,
which seemed
a denial of all that had been meant by the
Christian
virtues, and which was the more horrifying
because it
was in the capital of the Christian
Church that it
reached its height. Shocked by the gulf
between theory
and practice, men turned this way and that
to find some
solution of the tension which
racked them. The
German reformers followed one road and
preached a
return to primitive simplicity. But who
could obliterate
the achievements of two centuries,
or blot out
the new worlds which science had
revealed? The
Humanists took another, which should
lead to the
gradual regeneration of mankind by the
victory of
reason over superstition and brutality
and avarice.
But who could wait for so distant a
consummation?
Might there not be a third? Was it not
possible that,
purified and disciplined, the very
qualities which
economic success demanded — Industry,
diligence, sobriety,
frugality — were themselves, after all, the
foundation,
at least, of the Christian virtues?
Was it not
conceivable that the "gulf which yawned
between a
luxurious world and the life of the spirit could
be bridged,
not by eschewing material interests as the
kingdom of
darkness, but by dedicating them to the
service of God?"
It was that revolution in the traditional
scale of
ethical values which the Swiss reformers

desired to
achieve ; it was that new type of
Christian character
that they laboured to create. Not as
part of any
scheme of social reform, but as elements in
a plan of
moral regeneration, they seized on the
aptitudes culti-
vated by the life of business and affairs,
stamped on
them a new sanctification, and used them
as the warp
of a society in which a more than Roman
discipline
should perpetuate a character the exact
antithesis of
that fostered by obedience to Rome,
The Roman
was held, through the example of its
rulers
had encouraged luxury and ostentation :
the members
of the Reformed Church must be
economical and